

ASK YOURSELF THESE SIX QUESTIONS...



**If you answered YES to any of these
questions, please turn over...**

Gabapentin and pregabalin – known as ‘gabapentinoids’ – are used to help with persistent pain (pain that has lasted longer than three months) caused by damaged or malfunctioning nerves. It is often described as burning, shooting, electric shocks or pins and needles. If you are experiencing persistent pain and answered ‘yes’ to any of the questions overleaf, then read on...

How effective are gabapentinoids?

- 5 in every 10 people taking a gabapentinoid for nerve pain **will not get any benefit at all**
- Even those who don’t get any benefit will still experience side effects
- If you have pain that is not caused by nerve damage or from a change in how the nerve works, gabapentinoids are very unlikely to be of any help to you
- 1 in every 3 people taking gabapentinoids will get side effects that stop them using the medicine

What about the side effects?

There are lots of possible side effects.

The most common, experienced by up to 6 in every 10 people are:

- **Problems with thinking clearly**
- **Dizziness, problems walking**
- **Tiredness**
- **Tremors (shaking)**
- **Weight gain, water retention or bloating**
- **Changes in mood and emotions, includes depression**
- **Headache or vision changes**

Taking gabapentinoids with drugs like codeine and morphine also increases the risk of breathing problems and accidental overdose.

Are they the right treatment for me?

- **Has your pain reduced since starting or increasing the dose of the gabapentinoid?**
- **Are you doing more or recovering faster from activity than before you started taking the medicine?**

If you do not think the medicines are helping, then you are probably better off trying to slowly reducing them, with the support of your healthcare team.

Even people who think they might be better using a gabapentinoid should reduce the dose from time to time, to see if the medicines really are helping or if they get the same benefit on a smaller dose.

So how do I reduce them?

Gabapentinoids should always be reduced slowly and with support. You may need to have different strengths of capsules/tablets to enable you to do this.

Please make an appointment with a member of our healthcare team to discuss making changes to your gabapentinoid medicines.

Are there other ways of managing my pain apart from medicines?

Yes! There are lots of new approaches to pain relief apart from medicines. These new approaches to pain self-management are helping people regain a better quality of life. Many of these are things you can do yourself. GPs and pain specialists are increasingly supporting patients to adopt these new ways to manage their persistent pain.

To find out more, go to www.my.livewellwithpain.co.uk or www.pain toolkit.org and check out some of the ideas and techniques. We can help you with these. If you’d like to know more, talk to our healthcare team.